

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR
REGENERATION**

CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

Decision Made: 12 November 2010

**RIVER MEDWAY CYCLE PATH BETWEEN MAIDSTONE AND
TONBRIDGE FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Issue for Decision

To consider the allocation of funds towards a feasibility study into the introduction of a cycle path along the River Medway between Maidstone and Tonbridge.

Decision Made

That up to £2,500 be allocated from the Growth Point revenue towards a feasibility study into the introduction of a cycle path along the River Medway between Maidstone and Tonbridge.

Reasons for Decision

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) is leading on a long-term project which aims to improve cycle access along the River Medway from Tonbridge to Maidstone (and onto the Medway Towns through the Valley of Visions Landscape Partnership Scheme). A working group comprising officers from the relevant District Councils, Environment Agency, Sustrans, Public Rights of Way and Kent Highways has been established to guide this project.

As a starting point, a feasibility study is required to test the possibility of connecting both towns along the River Medway. The study will identify the funding sources required for such a route, the landowner consultation required, potential strategic and leisure connections along the route, and any issues that may need to be overcome in order to keep the route as close to the River Medway as possible.

It is hoped the route will consist of a shared-use cycle and pedestrian path, of a similar standard to the Tonbridge to Penshurst shared-use route (National Cycle Network, Regional Route 12) which is proving an extremely popular leisure route since it was completed in 2005.

From a Maidstone perspective, this project represents an excellent opportunity to improve the riverside path heading west towards our boundary with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council near Watlingtonbury.

The Council is currently working in partnership with Kent Highways Services and the recently established Maidstone Cycle Forum to develop a cycle strategy for the borough. The strategy, which is currently in draft form, identifies a number of potential strategic and leisure routes which are aimed at encouraging active travel.

One of the priorities in the draft cycling strategy is the upgrade of the riverside towpath between the town centre and Allington Lock to a shared-use cycle/pedestrian path. This route is currently the subject of a KCC Local Transport Plan bid for funding for 2011/2012. Therefore, a future extension to the riverside route to the south west, as identified in the cycle strategy, presents a fantastic opportunity towards increasing the level of cycling in the borough.

A feasibility study is currently underway (funded by Valley of Visions) to assess the potential of developing a shared-use riverside route between Allington Lock and Aylesford village. This route would provide both a strategic and recreational function, and would connect to ongoing cycle route developments in the Medway Towns, thus allowing for the overall long-term vision of a riverside connection between Rochester and Tonbridge via Maidstone.

For the Maidstone to Tonbridge riverside route, the feasibility study is expected to cost around £15k and will be tendered by MVCP. It is expected that a contribution of around £2000 will be given by each partner on the working group. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council have already given their support to the study by allocating £2500 from their Planning and Development Section. Maidstone will put forward a similar amount for such an exciting long-term project.

The long-term vision is that the route will be developed in sections, which will be determined through the feasibility study. If funding could not be found for the complete route then sections would be completed as funding did become available.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

If this feasibility study is not supported, the project may not go ahead and Maidstone could miss out on the opportunity to be involved in the development of this strategically important cycle path running through the borough.

Background Papers

None

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please
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submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: xxxxxxxxxx.

